



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

For Release: November 16, 1992

Georgia Parham 202-208-5634

ENDANGERED SPECIES NEWS **FROM THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

After Decades, Canada Geese Return to Russia

An endangered species success story in the United States may have a Russian chapter if an effort to bring rare Aleutian Canada geese back to Russia is successful. After being virtually extinct in Asia for decades, the geese that once migrated between Japan and Russia will be returning, thanks to a permanent loan of 10 nesting pairs from the United States. The Aleutian Canada goose was once listed as endangered in the United States, but recovery efforts by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service brought populations back from a low of fewer than 800 in 1967 to a current estimate of 8,000 birds. The species' status in the United States has been upgraded to threatened. The birds sent to Russia will be the start of an extensive captive breeding program. In time, Russian biologists hope to duplicate the success of the recovery effort and re-establish a migrating Aleutian Canada goose population in Asia.

Conservation Agreement Will Help Rare Plants

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Center for Plant Conservation have signed a cooperative agreement aimed at

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benefiting rare plant species in the United States. The agreement paves the way for the Service to provide funding and technical expertise in support of the Center's research and development of techniques for propagation and reintroduction of endangered and rare plants. The Center is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of the Nation's most critically endangered plants.

More Condors to Fly Free

Six rare California condors will soon join the Nation's only free-flying condor in the skies over the Los Padres National Forest in southern California. The young condors, all hatched last spring in captivity at the Los Angeles Zoo, were transferred in October from the zoo to a secluded acclimation site in the forest's Sespe Condor Sanctuary. By December or January, once the birds are old enough and have mastered flying skills, biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will drop the nets surrounding the site, and birds will be free to take to the skies.

All wild condors were brought into captivity in 1987. Last January, two California condors became the first of their species to fly free since that time. One of the pair was found dead recently, of antifreeze poisoning. The bird was apparently attracted to a puddle of the toxic liquid. While disappointed with the accidental death, the Service's condor team is hopeful that the release of the six young condors will mark another positive step along the road to recovery for North America's largest bird.

Black-footed Ferrets Released in Wyoming

Biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the State of Wyoming released another 91 black-footed ferrets in the Shirley Basin of Wyoming this fall, supplementing last year's historic reintroduction of 49 of the rare mammals. Black-footed ferrets were thought to be extinct until a small population was discovered in 1981 and eventually taken into captivity. Breeding programs have boosted ferret numbers, allowing biologists to attempt to establish a wild population with captive-bred animals. Encouraging news for the ferret recovery program came last summer when biologists discovered that several of the released ferrets had produced young in the wild.